



the world of bizarre video

No. 16

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In This Issue:

"I ACCUSE!"

The Passion Of Abel Gance
by Stephen R. Bissette



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OLD TOWN



"He looked up, suddenly seeing his situation. The message was still flooding. It made him feel like an invader in a minefield for eternity."

—from *Swing Sister* (1992)
by Robert E. Rasmussen

The passage from J.D. Salinger's novella tale of *Buddhachar* gives just about every up the appeal of swing culture in a poly-examination. The conclusion of our swing book overview appears in this issue along with Harold Clark's look at two "Gut and Gerdie" movies from the Effort. We're also pleased to present the first of our past article by Stephen R. Bissette on the making of Abel Gance's horrific anti-war film, *Poverty* (1928). But first, here's the news:

News And Views

Articles continue to engulf the video rental industry despite several blows it's floundered in the last 18 months. Headed by the slump are the independent rental stores, who tend to collapse whenever a larger franchise store opens nearby. And as this smaller storefront falls by the wayside, the former occupants of windows close in for the kill. "Just as certain records and movie posters are rare and command high prices," notes the authors, "so it stands that discontinued video can be rare." Hey, isn't that what you want?

"Video Opener: Paramount And Blackhawk," notes the headline inside *Probs*, the latest issue of Video Opener, the purveyor of "rare and collectible video content." This article which follows outlines the Video Opener game plan. "Blackhawk holds claims that once ruled their neighborhood. Like a big machine it unearths rare videos from older low school stores, putting them in the used market." "Blackhawk's plan is to place the goods at Video Opener, who buy more than 100,000 copies, make prices higher than original list, and then market them as 'collectibles.'" Want an original copy of Abel Gance's discontinued video release of *Attack Of The Crab Monsters*? How about Magnate's *Beyond The Valley Of The Dolls*? Video Opener has it of yours got your price.

Of course, unless such as Video Opener really reflect the principle of supply and demand. Nevertheless, the company is essentially taking store titles out of circulation in order to increase their value. The surest bet for Opener positioning is to hit

COVER: Stephen R. Bissette interprets insight from Abel Gance's 1928 *J'Accuse*. In the center is the original U.S. window card for *That They May Live*.

the video classroom sales before the "punkified" movie in. Ask your store rent at once managers if they'll sell you their copy of a desired title. If the tape doesn't rent, it's worth little to them. (That about all don't say from greedy sources.)

Speaking of collectors, readers who listed posters and postcards will want to subscribe to *Movie Advertising Collector*, a profusely illustrated publication dedicated to cataloging the finer points of advertising and caring for movie memorabilia. Previous issues of *Movie Advertising Collector* have documented out-of-the-way, lately cashed original ads, and other facets of movie picture advertising. In addition, the March 1992 issue features a three-page article about postcards from last year and an illuminating look at window cards to the current time. Each *Movie Advertising Collector* also includes a listing of whatever type of movie memorabilia is featured in the issue. We can't wait to see what we get for the upcoming "blizzard" issue.

Published and mostly written by George Reed, a Philadelphia transit driver, *Movie Advertising Collector* is really grammatical. At times George seems to follow his own rules of punctuation. Nevertheless, the man's knowledge of his subject will hit



genre love of movie art for its own sake—and not as an advertisement. *Movie Advertising Collector* is a welcome change of pace from publishing work aimed at the "get rich quick" crowd. For its value, its wealth of information, and its liberally personal approach, *MAC* stands proud among the others.

For a one-year (six issue) subscription to *Movie Advertising Collector*, send a \$10 check to George Reed, M.A.C., P.O. Box 28287, Philadelphia, PA 19143.

Letter

The ECCO office received the following letter from Keith Brown, the editor of the ultra-sleazy *A Taste Of Life* magazine.

Charlie:

Hello. Thought we'd let you know that *A Taste Of Life* #10 is out. Could you give us a slight mention? We've lost a lot of our fans' addresses and need them to survive. We give you a special update our mailing list. #10 is \$1 per U.S. and \$2 elsewhere.

A Taste Of Life
P.O. Box 7150
Waco, TX 76714

Interested readers should contact Keith at the above address and it is his that you have been reading what happened on your subscription and where the book and your back money. (That of the previous year) about a dollar in the "unemployed associated funds" so you can see, further research with his favorite brown bag to eat.

We Fucked Up

Here at ECCO we noticed, too late, of course, that in our October review of *And And* they attributed a quote on their own issue to a writer named James J. Wynn. Of course we wanted to say a little C. Hays. It's a small thing. It also topped the charts with "Honey Valley, P.E.A." Our apologies to both sources. We also noticed, at the direction of O.G. to see to it that the director of *Loveless Honey*, *Real Honey*, and *Not Honey*, directed *Chickadee*. Now maybe *Sharon* will call off his bawlers.

Pat Bissette informs me that *Frank Owsen* and *Blackhawk*, reviewed in ECCO #12, has been re-edited to remove the postcard completed about it. If available, jump-line for \$28 from Kill-Goat Productions, Inc. 12 Pleasantview Lane, Circle Pines, MN 55414.

Thanks

We would like to thank the following people for their help in putting this issue together: Stephen R. Bissette, M.A.C., Chervinsky and Doug Chapman of *Strong Magazine*, Carol Dwyer, David J. Fausch, Doug Hickey, Susan R. Johnson, Eric Ladd, Tim J. Jones, I was, Joe and Sam McCabe, Jim Manning, and Glen Boyd Perry Whitman. We would also like to thank Dr. Walter Courtney of the Florida Atlantic Institute for his information about the working culture.

Thankfully James that *Chickadee* got no sales. C. Hays. Wright. This article is dedicated to Walter Courtney, and to those who will survive, walk up that one-way street.

ECCO Cracks Spines

Readers who wish to purchase the best most often wonder through a multitude of post psychology and an book together to find a name that doesn't enter a pencil in previous of chocolate bars, or pink as polygraphical. Here, when attempted to narrow the search. Although two of the following books are not about exploitation movies, their content is good. It's a name that is common.

The critical of Christopher Joyce, and Eric S. Moore, *Whitman's The Great 1914*, *Blackhawk* (1992), appropriate to publish "The Society News" with their regard the legend of "the crime" (see). The authors, completing account of the career of society.

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Clyde Snow is a herpetologist and ornithologist who occasionally identifies the vocalized notes of Bick's Cuckoo and the Noddybird. Still in Bolivia, vividly against the background of his book, *Specifically the Book: Folks and Nature* and his association as they compare photographs, photos and records, and the testimonies of several others and finally in their search to identify a new species of bird, how it may or may not be.

Know is a leader in the field, and her assignments are as varied as the reasons for murder. He

examination of the decomposed corpses of the teenage victims of killer clown John Wayne Gacy, and identified a skeleton found in Hines as that of the drowned Nan aged 16, and Miss Mangione. She also uncovered shocking evidence about the bloody battle at Little Big Horn, and questioned a train whose girls took part in the rape of the bodies of Argentine death squad victims from their war-ravaged graves. **Witnesses From The Grave** recounts much of the above, combined with other findings.

The book's grim accounts of disaster and death are somewhat lessened by the author's sketches of Snow as a drawing cowboy who had had a dancehall before his melodramatic approach to writing the mysteries prompted by unsatisfied griefs. Unlike the horror movie stereotype of those whose painful employment lies in the rendering of human corpses, Snow is drawn by a finer level of life that clatters with the book's own stark events. But what is most surprising is that Snow's colorful career has also yielded a weekly television series. It could lack Chinaman's fertilizer as

While Joyce and Slater continue to know enough about the case to start to write a book, "RCOJ did not provide any reading of the 1975 discovery of a mummified body in the bushes of an amusement park in Long Beach, California. An investigation by Slater identified the remains as Elmer McCurdy, an Oklahoma outlaw killed by a posse in 1911. What happened to the unfortunate outlaw's mortal remains is a little more of an American mystery. The book is told from the heart of the criminal underworld, which it does. Ultimately, Joyce and Slater both Elmer's tale with their reliance on newspaper accounts of his discovery but it is a welcome insight from the killer's perspective. (The complete story of corpse and soliloquy see Elmer McCurdy will appear in *Juneteenth* 2019, the second volume of *Black Lives Matter* in Anthropology and History of www.civilrights.org.)

Though it never attempts to exploit its potentially hard subject, *Witnesses* from the 1940s onwards looks towards the



merely curious with behind-the-scenes accounts of political treachery and mass murder. Readers seeking more than a cheap thrill will also not be disappointed.

In 1978, another publication - a cheapish tabloid - also confronted the Grim Reaper, but was Joyce and Silver's sober respect. This unprinted review of books that taught how to commit murder using everyday household appliances, had supplied blueprints for building a yellow - and adding a working trap-door - in your living room. These blueprints were supplemented with photo spreads of homicidal maniacs and grisly appraisals from the files of the FBI and the Bureau of the Office of Chief Medical Examiner. By now violence in protest is waning; a white publisher would dare print such heinous material?

At Colburn did *His Death* Magazine both reviled and ridiculed the subject: death, the second great obsession at *Seven Magazine* had similarly received pornography. But unlike the *Impact*, *Death* was treated before an almost unanimously indifferent public. It flopped miserably after only four issues, convincingly proving that eating rules over right matters in the minds of mainstream America.

[illegible]

Such universal coverage made Seattle unique in the tabloid marketplace, a distinction that only helped to fuel it. Jack Steinberg and Pat Miller's *Seattle Times*



Productions are distributing three of the four traces of Deaths as spiral-bound copies. Included is a historical and informative essay on lynchings by Stevenson, featuring capsule reviews of earlier publications including *National News*, *Essex Herald*, and *The Evening World*.

At these rates, suggest, DeWitt is not a very well-off fellow. Gelstein's house has more beer blenders than his side-of-the-pipe (and free) toilet.

Isolated campaigns for donations in Christian churches that feed hungry Third World infants? A full-page advertisement for a charity called Bury The Chicks? A promise of satisfaction of knowing couldn't give money to an alive, at least you grow them? But as Strossman's Gnostics did not to being a disempower and black out of death just to be his own? But he was two years ago. Although to be that in our culture they NEVER gave pointed Bury, most of these give.

[Death is available for \$10 postpaid from John Stevenson, 171 Auburn Street, #11, Cambridge, MA 02130.]

Last fall we received four glossy, oversized soft-cover books of erotic art from Italy's Giffuring Images. The eleven-book "Divi" series, with titles including "Divi Baroque" and "Divi Surrealist," offers graphic homage to a broad range of obscenities including Linus Kraw, Anais Nin, satanism, Russ Meyer, Ernst Von Sodenho, foot fetishism and, naturally, the Munchies DeSade.

Although each edition sports its own theme, the overall look remains the same: stylish and explicit. With a well-balanced mixture of photography and artwork, the range of women is broadened, refined, and ultimately idealized into two structures. Though occasionally problematic in its imagery, what the *Diva* series offers deconstructing viewers is a new look at femininity in any short-on-visual-porn industry. In fact, although its publisher may flinch, the *Diva* series is more a product of the art world than of the trash culture good because while it does:

Although each of the "Diva" books - a charming series - offers new, arresting profiles and includes an English translation of an iconic Italian text, *BCCO* readers will particularly enjoy "Cinema 1951-1965." Its addition to an archival filmography, "Cinema 1951-1962" of first sound-book, retrospective films of feminist and obscure film in which the implicit sexual context of key scenes is made so explicit that the imagery bursts like steam (just: *This technique is standing when applied to Michael Powell's*

THIS IS VELDA, AND HER POSSESSIVE FRIEND

Peeping Tom (1960) that proved to be even more effective when underlining the heterosexual slanting of *The Horror Of Spider Island*, a sexual work from the same year.

[The entire "Dist" series, as well as books on illustrators Wally Wood and John Willie and pin-up queen Betty Page, are available from Guttering Images, Editors of Dist, Via Ardena Drive 11102, 50142 Fresno, Calif. Send \$4.00 postage for "Dist Cinema 1961-1965," or write for a catalog.]

And finally the ubiquitous Fred Allen Ray, co-founder, publisher and prolific director of low-budget video movies, has returned to the writing fold. Recently he sold a poem (5) to *Wood Tapes* magazine and an entire book about independent filmmakers (underway) to McFarland, a North Carolina reference book factory. We haven't seen the poem yet (hope it's a haiku), but *The New Poverty Row: Independent Filmmakers As Documentaries* is a lively treat that contains of seven chapters, each analyzing a particular independent distribution outfit through interviews with the filmmakers, articles in trade magazines, and other readily sources.

The New Poverty Row kicks off with a look into the world of the late Jerry Warren, the only filmmaker in the book that Ray treats with condemnation. Warren's reputation (all these all things) will no doubt prove the proclamation of an independent filmmaker whose success in Hollywood has spurred hostility from various cliques of London. But Warren at last. Instead by Ray's comments (and by his own quoted remarks, which reveal an ugly distaste for the respect one of his audience of all the filmmakers profiled in *The New Poverty Row*, Warren alone seems to have not harbored any effective for movie's wholeness.

Ray next tackles Roger Corman's Filmgroup in a chapter that should be referenced alongside Corman's autobiography from last year. Putting his hero worship aside, Ray demonstrates the veracity of the Corman book's title and reveals that the family atmosphere Filmgroup was not one of his founder's highly touted successes. Corman's creative members of Filmgroup, some conspicuously absent from his own book, are also covered in *The New Poverty Row*.

In subsequent chapters, Ray traces the careers of Rose W. Lynn (Hemphreys Bowser), David L. Lyon (American Greetings), Sam Siskin (Independent International), Lawrence H. Woodner (Dynamite Pictures), and the author's own American Independent Productions, Inc. Although the latter industry may be somewhat self-serving, Ray's overwhelmingly modest about his commercial success in the current



market of independent filmmaking. What's more, say the coverage given *Guttering Independent* justify in the book's title (recently McFarland rejected Ray's working title) none of the other companies profiled in *The New Poverty Row* has distributed a film since 1965, and the majority have closed shop.

Can a fifteen-haired beauty love a hairy gorilla?



Velda. Knows!

Despite an incoherent talk, *The New Poverty Row* was sold, not as a reference book, and a fine read. Corman details are complemented by humorous quotes and recommendations about these low-budget filmmakers. The text is complemented with selections from Ray's own collection of pin-ups, stills and postcard ads, and another reason to read should take in each of the chapters includes with a comic book illustration, including an entire program with an American's Seven Inch Winkler and *Warner Bros. Maps*.

Although Ray is at his best when tracing the pages of Hemphreys' beloved "Black Island" series (particularly in the passage recalling *Alisa Alonzo*, his "Mistress Infection" from *Mad Doctor Of Blood Island*), the whole of *The New Poverty Row* best be with the intention of a gift. Followers of independent filmmaking will find it indispensable, particularly those who are working who expanding their growth in poverty pits, paying cheap work, humbling, pushing, and sometimes actually making independent movies and working models in their (broken) screen industry.

[*The New Poverty Row* is available for \$20.00 postpaid from McFarland & Co., Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640.]

The Age Inside Me by Harold Clarke

One of the most powerful plays of class, exploitation movies was in large, irregular encounters between rapists and laughing victims. Most of these films, however, inevitably spent countless hours agonizing by depicting their audiences that need to be present in or swing of. Exploitation, color, thought, and among these, *Untamed Mistress* and *The Bride And The Beast* stand out as good examples of the sex in a sympathetic of not being, side while showing the pain and tension between the girl and the gorilla to make and sense. Unusually, both also contain footage from films featuring people from Africa, both for all their apparent similarities, the two films contain a unique, sophisticated perspective that makes the screening of such a wildly violent experience.

Untamed Mistress (1965), written, directed, and produced by exploitation star Ron Givens, pulsates with sensuality and primitive violence.

From the full-length opening sequence, to the four pinhead make, *Untamed Mistress* is presented as a sex cult, one with a strong black and white theme, but with its own subtle appeal. *Untamed Mistress* delivers some of the most daring images ever loved against the screen of

Later that evening, as Dan and Laura sleep, Spacely breaks out of bed and sneaks to their bedroom on the second floor. Laura, wearing her slippers, awakens and walks to the fireplace. Spacely enters the room and begins to kiss her right groin from behind as the victim is fast asleep. Meanwhile, Dan gets out of bed, switches on his rifle, and shoots Spacely dead. An agitated Laura tells the incredulous Dan of her strange feelings of longing and longing while in the animal's presence, but Dan dismisses her ruminations and the two return to bed.

During the night, Laura dreams of running and fleeing through dense undergrowth. She screams ferociously, and then goes to tell Dan of her vision. Again he is oblivious to her urgency, treating each of her genuine concerns while pointing her with a teddy bear.

The next morning Dan brings a professional to the house to talk with Laura. Upon examining her, the doctor suggests the use of hypnosis, which enables one of explicit exploration, which enables one of explicit feelings that go direct similar behaviorism suggestions from such films such as *The Trip*, *Psycho-Gut*, and other medical psychodrama. Laura tells of being as a gorilla and being attacked by frightened gorillas. Breaking the incantation, the psychiatrist informs an incredulous Dan that they've just witnessed a scene from Laura's previous life. Against the doctor's advice, Dan takes Laura to the jungle for their honeymoon.

Although the jungle expedition commences peacefully, the urgency of the jungle soon intensifies. While Dan and his servant Tern struggle with two ferocious tigers, Laura strays from camp and is maulled by one of the carnivorous felines. Recovering in her tent, she dreams of a gorilla wandering through the undergrowth. Wondering, on several spots across the camp, Laura, in a constant state, escape out to meet him. Dan witnesses the grappling and arrests the ape, who throws him down and covers the site with a completed Laura seated in his arms.

With rifle in hand, Dan follows the pair to the gorilla's cave. There, Dan clashes with two gorillas, killing one and knocking the other unconscious. But Laura spurs his rescue efforts, and Dan struggles to slay her two subordinates until the unconscious ape regains his senses and knocks her cold. The shrike then lifts a newly pregnant Laura and, in a room after her bride over the threshold, kisses out of the gate with her being risky and willing in her clutches.

The Bride And The Beast concludes with a befuddled Dan seeking an explanation from Laura's psychiatrist for her disappearance. The doctor tells Dan that all human beings possess animal instincts, so a revelation in a previous exposure should not be dismissed. Laura, explains the doctor, displayed these animal characteristics before she married to her origin.

As might be expected from a film with Wood's involvement, *The Bride And The Beast* is graced with few technical innovations. Much of the film's second half consists of silent footage from *Man-Eater of Keweenaw*, another Siskel film. The transition between the two films is choppy,

if not jarring. In addition, most of the performance is bordering on over-the-top. The lone exception is Christine Austin's Laura. With her jangling expression by Spacely's arrival or lying seductively in the bed's arms, Austin exerts an aura of menacing sexuality that few film actors of the time could match. The character Laura, however, died in its original sweater (by Wood's remark), was off-sophisticated fireworks with her gestures and physical actions. She poses as a performance that equals if not exceeds the striking temptations of today's trend.

With Austin's over-casualty in mind, *The Bride And The Beast* warrants special recognition as a breakthrough film in exploring alternative sexuality. Although it may disappoint those seeking explicit content (as in *Whispering*), the film does offer a heightened sexuality that had mostly been suggested in productions such as *Captive Wild Women* (1933) and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1931). This aspect is particularly exemplified in the mutually charged encounters between Laura and Spacely. Few films prior to *The Bride And The Beast* had depicted intimacies of sexuality with such intensity.

In fact, both *Untamed Mistress* and *The Bride And The Beast* differ from films with similar elements by not losing the monster in the protagonist. Accordingly, both films use this device to liberate displaced women from a life of dearest and servility, but at that point the two part ways. *Untamed Mistress* chooses to show the descending consequences of sharing against her, while *The Bride And The Beast* resolutely continues the agency of living a life of repression and the victory of finally unshackling oneself from societal constraints.

The latter emphasis is directly attributable to screenwriter Wood, whose maternal instincts and struggles with maternalism have been largely dismissed in films such as his own *Gilda* or *Gloria*. Wood uses Laura to plead his case, for in nearly every line she conveys a yearning to return to her true and former self. At the film's apocalyptic denouement, Wood's heroine, his longing, albeit viciously, by going Laura—through almost supernatural means—the opportunity to find lasting self-fulfillment and satisfaction as a gorilla.

One need not be excessively enthralled by either film to appreciate their uniqueness in the search of exploration. Prospective viewers, however, must likely will recognize the underlying message that from beneath the surface of both films, and will contrast them for their points on conventional horror fare. Additionally, is an age in which more productions that profess to criticize taboo and incite and stand against social norms, *Untamed Mistress* and *The Bride And The Beast* represent two changes in the indictment against the creatively paraded and dysfunctional pig culture the we inhabit.

(*Untamed Mistress* is available for \$27.95 postpaid from Orion Films, 2525 Emerson Hill Circle, Nashville, TN 37211. *The Bride And The Beast* sells for \$39.95 postpaid from Boyd Magers, 10217 Page Place, N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87112.)



She was the kind who moved right in!

LOUISIANA HUSSY

NAN PETERSON • PETER COE
ROBERT RICHARDS • BETTY LYNN
... • HARRY LAUTER
LEADS DREAM • TELL ME • HARRY NIGHT

Swamp Trash And Bayou Blues - Part II
by Charles Kilgore

The first part of *Swamp Trash And Bayou Blues* traced the growth of an aesthetic centering around the isolated culture of people living among the backwaters of southern swamps and bayous. Swamp followers drifted up from the bog and settled into huts, popular music, and, of course, sex. The popular pulp stage of the swamp's rustic subculture was defined even before William Beaudine's silent *Spookhouse* (1932). In that Mary Pickford plays as all coming to life, here, the swamp or bayou is itself a character - a

creel antagonist who endures the basic law of survival, that only the strong survive.

What the film first attempted was to separate the sensation part of the swamp with the more basic and brutal behavior of people. From swamp trash (an audience identification figure against criminals, degenerates, or hell (edged) monsters in a swamp setting that is merely neutral, one side of the other always claims the swamp as its ally.

As a breeding ground for evil, the bayou is given its due in Lew Seamen's *Louise Lure* (1938). Realized by Joy Hoar's (Helen) (uncredited), the New Orleans based company that had produced Roger Corman's *Swamp Women* in 1935, *Louise Lure* follows the evil design of

tricksteress Nina Dupree, a swamp-ade (swamp) female whose body of loose-wedding leads to a woman's suicide. Although Seamen - who had previously directed liddle fare such as *Superman And The Mole Men* (1951) and *Tuber The Great* (1954) - seems an ill-suited choice as director, *Louise Lure* features and scenes work from the Bayou team of Ted and Vincent Soble. It starred Nina Peterson from *The Millionaire* and actress Peter Coe (Ed Wood's last roommate) as a jettison Cajun.

As the audience for such simplistic morality plays gradually faded, the forbidden culture of swamp trash was borrowed as window-dressing for film

It's breaking records in Drive Ins - Family Theatres - Art Theatres

This picture is not great BUT . . . they stand in line to see it!
ALL IT DOES IS MAKE MONEY!

It's breaking records in Drive Ins - Family Theatres - Art Theatres

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NAKED
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<p>In Atlanta, Ga. Mack Ginn JACO Prod. & Dist. 302 W. H. W. 332-8981</p>	<p>In New York, N.Y. J. Hoffner Hoffner Prod. & Dist. 302 W. H. W. Cody 3-9135</p>	<p>In Boston, Mass. Mel Davis Davis Film Distribution 824 Union Square Bldg. SA 5-2394 MA 6-8717</p>	<p>In Washington, D.C. Sam Warner Warner Film Co. 1013 N. Jersey Ave., N.W. 393-9738</p>
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<p>DALLAS, TEXAS: Al Wolf, Acme Pictures 1716 Jackson St., RI 8-3338</p>	<p>DENVER, COLORADO: J. N. Narcissos, Narcissos Productions 901 Sherman St., Suite 810, 625-4864</p>	<p>CALIFORNIA: Mc, Terlex Film Circle Exchange</p>
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COOL IT, DAD!
STAY OUT OF THEIR WAY IF YOU CAN!

**THEIR MOTORS ARE FLAMING!
THEIR MAMAS ARE ON FIRE!
OGGS... ON THE LOOSE...!**

SAVAGES FROM HELL

**MAKES HELL'S ANGELS
LOOK LIKE BOY SCOUTS**

**CHICKS!
CHOPPERS!
A CHASE!
MAKING
BUNCH
GIRLS
A SCENE
WITH
EVERYTHING**

**A TEN A.C.
STORY FOR
MATURE ADULTS**

Copy #10718

AN INNOCENT GIRL THE PRIZE IN A DIRTY GAME

FERLIN HUSKY in

SWAMP GIRL

**"Well if you ain't
my Pa...
Who is?"**

**FILMED IN VIVID COLOR IN THE NATURAL
WILDS OF THE OKEFENOKEE SWAMPS**

from other genres. By the mid-sixties, swampy scenery had appeared in every popular movie in the genre, from horror to science fiction, exploitation. The proliferation of swamp scenery was abetted by the growth of independent filmmaking companies in Florida and Louisiana and by fast-buck independent drama to the lack of being in control of movie assets as cheap, picturesque locations for low-budget movies. The Everglades was such a setting for an obscure Florida horror entitled *The Nest Of The Cuckoo Birds* (1965). Starring Burt Williams from the *Twins* Kilt or *Wolf's Tongue Of Desire*, *The Nest Of The Cuckoo Birds* is the oldest tale of an IRS agent (Williams) searching the Everglades for moonshiners. When the scenery first reveals itself as a small, swampy hole managed by a moonshine bartender, the plot sharply turns towards the horror. Stumbling into the moonshiner's Chapel Of The Dead, Williams discovers that he has just engaged more than one. With this revelation, Williams' character and the Williams shifts into the mystery. Remembered by few, *The Nest Of The Cuckoo Birds* is best remembered for ultra-crude advertising which promised "Naked drama, action, wild love, and HORROR!" and needed reviewers to "meet the BUREAU of the Everglades!" There does in complete chaos a bit on this tale.

Low-budget television seldom will remember the following year's *Curse Of The Swamp Creature*, however. Made with pocket change for AIP-TV by Larry Ruckman, *Curse* starred an entertainment-fiction John Agar with Bill Thurman in a ridiculous tale about a mad doctor who creates reptile people in his secret laboratory in the Florida Everglades. Although *Curse* was the only low-budget AIP TV project that wasn't based on one of the studio's earlier, bigger budgeted drive-in hits, it's a delayed reaction to Ray del Ruth's *Alligator People* (1959). [*Curse Of The Swamp Creature* is available from Video Distributors, 535 West 32nd St., New York, NY 10018 for \$29.95 postage.]

The Everglades was the setting for later fun in the 1960s action roughie, *Swamp From Hell*. With a plot that pitted migrant workers against a sadistic tiger gang, *Swamp From Hell* was created by producer K. Gordon Murray and director Jan Probst in a follow-up to their 1960 movie about Swampy Swamp (see ECCC #11). Also released under the title *Big Enough And Old Enough*, *Swamp From Hell* follows Texas, a migrant worker's young daughter, as she makes a play for it. But, the leader of a motorcycle club. Drugged with jealousy, *Big Enough And Old Enough* leads to a series of events that results in the abduction and rape of Texas and the death of it. It's fun.

Filmed in color, *Swamp From Hell* represented a higher goal for Murray's Texas Entertainment in films. In three years for wider distribution, Murray and Probst needed the current exploitation movie made for magazines. The popularity of snake bite movies in drive-in theatres led them to include a "snake buggy" run through the Everglades, a segment captured with penicillin by Swampy Swamp cameraman J. Rafael Ritz. The producer even owned the late Cyril Cusack (Swampy's brother) to

Reopening, which had robbed the film from Horton in the seventh and changed the title to the more marketable *Blood Waters Of Dr. Z*. Through his Aquarian Releasing, Inc. distribution outfit, Lovejoy turned his acquisition loose on the greenhouse crowd. *Blood Waters Of Dr. Z* played to extraordinary Times Square audiences who were well-known with winking cashish and chankierized in a horror film without nudity or graphic violence. Lovejoy quickly licensed the film to International Video Entertainment for their Thriller Video division.

With drastically expanding artwork and phony credits, the Thriller Video release, entitled once more as *Attack Of The Swamp Creature*, represents outrageous greed at its most deceptive. The film's memorable graphics, an absurd tirade about cannibalized sea predators, has been portrayed in form of a grotesque Elvira introduction. Unfortunately, the Elvira One also appears in the middle of the tape to "talk" on the phone to themselves from the film, an auditory and tonaltime interruption that serves only to sabotage the bizarre mood established by Horton's regisstrally current direction. Swedes are advised to forego the video in favor of a fine-appeal television showing of *The Blood Waters Of Dr. Z*. Which your local listings.

Berton's fully fable wasn't the only cinematic swamp charmer inspired by the son of news regularly reported in the tabloids. Charles B. Pierce's *The Legend Of Boggy Creek* (1972), a mock-documentary based on the reported sightings of a terrifying Yf-f-f-f monster in the swamps of Adamsville, was an incremental find it spawned two sequels. The zany appeal is best represented by the scene from the original film where the man-paging boat chases a rubber crocodile off the toilet seat.

The following year, a gory horror film entitled *Swamp Of The Ravens* was co-produced by Miami Films of Spain and Palmetto Pictures of Miami. *Swamp Of The Ravens* was a horror feature from Spanish producer-director Manuel Cano (he produced *Bewitched For A Housewife*) about a mad scientist named Dr. Pootis who conducts experiments on unwilling female subjects in his laboratory deep in the swamp. Although Pootis believes his experiments to be inhuman, the discolored limbs that he dumps into the swampy rivers to life and attack the local populace. Actor Fernando Sanchez, who later portrayed a detective in *Amante de Osonero's* *Bonnie Which Child* (1977), appears as a detective investigating the discovery of exposed skeletons unearthed by a sewerer local.

According to the few who have seen it, *Swamp Of The Ravens* was an atrociously and surprisingly chilling horror film that featured unconformably realistic special effects. Indeed, areas of Dr. Pootis's experiments were supposedly "enhanced" with authentic autopsy footage. Nevertheless, the film is a true obscurity

due to an apparent failure to find distributors outside of Spain. Palmetto also produced the Miami-film. Sometimes Aunt Martha Dies Dreadful Things, an aptly named killer transmitts noise that was also more than fully released but is currently available on video. As for *Swamp Of The Ravens*, no one seems to know of its fate.

As *Swamp Of The Ravens* was being screened for rental by distributors, Florida-based actor Chris Robinson (Shelley) stopped behind the camera to direct his first feature film. Shot on location in the Everglades, *Catch The Black Swallow* was a crime-drama about escaped slaves who form a clanless

clique of indistinguishable butty peddlers. For *Thunder County* to be a part of film with such sadism, implied incestuous, sympathetic, and several bloody killings seemed to be for good luck. The most savory suggestion of *Thunder County* is the cameo appearance of a slowly-dying Shirley Maerz, who is certainly (for the record, at least) tied to alligator victim in scenes of running time.

Directed by actor Chris Robinson, *Thunder County* represents four snapshots from the Florida State Prison For Women who consumed Robinson's notebook to hold on to a swamp island situated in the Everglades. Their arrival coincides with a transaction on that same island between

prisoner Ted Cassidy and his two besties and an ace (Robinson, sporting Elvira seductively) to an understated Mr. Big. Unknown to Cassidy, the odds is actually an undercover cop sent in to catch both the Big Guy and Cassidy's master when the coyote takes place. The women are captured and forced to entertain the gangster until Robinson blows his cover. Even so that they will be killed as suggested by the mother, the girlfriend (Robinson is fighting the gang).

Unusually acted and shot as what occasionally appears to be a typical film stock, *Thunder County* is noteworthy on containing swamp come just something worth the predictability of its peers. The unexpected feelings, thoughts, and animal attacks that spine up the proceedings give *Thunder County* from the small low-budget action/adventure fare. The film is also indebted to Cassidy and Robinson, character actors whose modest likes have helped define films for women that this one, and to Phyllis Robinson and Anya Cassidy (credited as Anya Mark) as one of the female cast. Character actor Bob Leslie from Bill Greife's *Wendy* Maerz provides comedy relief as an old swamp bee on Cassidy's porch. Keep shoulders and pop up, Ladies readers.

backwoods degeneracy. He even has a pet alligator.

Viewers will note in the credits that *Thunder County* was edited by Carl Moxton, the director of *Bonnie International's A Season In The Streets*, who may have been hired by Maerz to reprise Robinson's footage. If so, the credits were worth the effort. *Thunder County* is diverting among trash that warrants a look from any devotee of regional filmmaking.

[*Thunder County* was once available through Home Video, a company that is now defunct. Look for it in other rental stores.]



community in the swamp. It played on late-eight television in the late sixties as *Swampfire Run*. Robinson was back the following year with *Thunder County*, a "bad girls" jet-break drama produced by the ubiquitous K. Gordon Murray in the twilight of his career.

Thunder County
Directed by Chris Robinson
Produced by K. Gordon Murray

The late K. Gordon Murray was never one to ignore a trend, and the PU-rated *Thunder County* (aka *Swamp Fever*) and his previous action film *The Drunkard* (1971) were proof that he was well aware of the commercial potential of action films

As Mickey made *Thunder Country* in South Florida, a successful husband and wife filmmaking team and an ex-Playboy model-turned-actress were on location in the Louisiana bayou shooting what would become the second highest-grossing swamp trash feature ever filmed. The film was called *Gator Bait* and Beverly Sebastian, their star, was Claudia Jennings, and the movie was *Gator Bait*.

Gator Bait

Produced and directed by Ford and Beverly C. Sebastian

Ford's husband and wife filmmakers Ford and Beverly Sebastian are known for their down-and-dirty approach to making low-budget features. Their 1974 *Gator Bait*, a crudely stitched combination of *Bayou and I Spent On Your Grave*, is arguably the highest pinnacle of the Sebastian legacy.

It stars prison convict Claudia Jennings, in one of two features she made with the Sebastians (the other is *The Single Girls*), as in *Bayou*, a swamp gal who would rather be choking her traps and reeking her powerful stinkies than hooking good old boys at the fire with her shotgun. But when some creep crawls down into the bayou and off his seat (a young John DeLuca), *Bayou* sets bigger traps.

Gator Bait is a plotless swampy plot similar to *Body Jack* or *Walking Tall* but for the swamp setting and the swamp gal's gender. For it is DeLuca himself who trips the yellow in the bayou and kills them one by one. What would be a stagnant swamp trash plot is invigorated by the personation of Jennings, whose lascivious postures helped salvage even the most hapless dreck, and by a bravura performance from swamp vitamin Bill Thurman. Ford Sebastian's camera idiosyncrasy captures the atmosphere of

but of bayou life as ably as it depicts the sudden eruption of violence. Beyond these technical merits is stretched a howlfield of sexual lusts, particularly regarding gator mutilation.

From the opening scene, *Gator Bait* examines a pseudo-feminist congerine in its portrayal of the desirable yet delicately aloof DeLuca. As the sight of her scantily-clad body inflames the camera with lust, her independence (as the center of their fear) The woman with which the corrupt patriarch views the self-sufficient DeLuca associates, in the Sebastian world view, into the fear of castration. This is not a good thing, by the script, first in a vulgar's penis attack. But DeLuca had earlier been seen as a teenager after an unsuccessful rape attempt, and then later when the same psychotic caught victim DeLuca's younger sister with his shotgun.



ABOVE: Claudia Jennings coats the bullet holes in Ford and Beverly Sebastian's lurid *Gator Bait* (1974).

Texas to forge his own violent brand of acting look. Browning now allow and a veteran huckster studied the film and paired it with a gaudy exploitation legend.

Scum Of The Earth

Directed by S.F. Browning

For a follow-up to his first feature, the former hit *Don't Look In The Basement*, S.F. Browning took dirt and now deep into the East Texas bogging to make *Scum Of The Earth*, a better blend of splatter and drama. Not only did the rock music in Browning's best film, but also in grotesque sexual aways fresh. What since *Scum Of The Earth* from the cinema place is a compelling script that is completed by several scenes, suitably believes to performance.

At the heart of this dirty tale is Odis Piccott, a backwoods lawyer whose dramatic proclivities include beating his hyper-active wife, berating his idiot son Roy, and smothering his infatuated teenage daughter. To this twisted dad runs a young lawyer who has discovered her husband murdered, as she getting from his chest. Seeking help from Odis, who the murderer during a mad dash through the swamp, the woman is turned forced to join the grotesquely dysfunctional family.

Browning repels Gene Ross under the screen *Scum Of The Earth* with his menacing portrayal of human monster Odis. Alistair as impetuous son, Ann Safford as Odis' abused wife Rayne and Browning stock player Camille Carr as that dirty daughter. Special mention should be given to the incredible performance of Charlie Hall as Odis Piccott's drowned son Roy. Well, let's hope that Charlie was performing.

Browning's story is aided by an intense if somewhat script that blends with backwoods dialogue worthy of Sam Shepard. Fever pitched suspense and weird, morbid logic what would have otherwise been class exploitation. In the context of his family life, *Scum Of The Earth* is the director's opposite of the whorish family from *Shanty Town*. It's a pseudo-critique of patriarchal rule, a false God from Jodie Christian's aggro. So-called Roy plotting at the terrified young woman up close distance during as they search for a way to escape to Rome every afternoon gesture and infection. His is a frightening performance that transcends a film nearly unable to sustain it.

In its final moments, *Scum Of The Earth* self-destructs. Repetitive, the conclusion was hardly improved on the on by Browning and Ross. Its self-conscious attempt at linking the horror of Vietnam with the domestic terrorism of Odis Piccott seems hysterically misguided. Also, the director's critique of the first scene actually puts inside the terrible physical and psychological warfare of the Piccotts' daily lives. After enduring hell with the Piccotts, Browning's profile and end or nearly a shock character from a classic movie.

Scum Of The Earth was originally released by Cinema Films in 1979 to modest professional success. In 2005, comic novelist Mike Riggio, who had already won a major hit novel for original *Peep White Trash*, stepped in as executive

SHE FOUND OUT HOW THEY WERE SCUM TUBING BOMB!



See the real poor white trash!

SCUM OF THE EARTH

producer, purchased Browning's story (a *Peep White Trash II*), and financed it with his own first installment. The movie hit scum worked despite the fact that Riggio's original was a mild black and white drama from 1957.

[*Scum Of The Earth*: not to be confused with the 1964 *Peep White Trash* film of the same title, is available from Magnolia Video as *Peep White Trash Part II*.]

When *Scum Of The Earth* was re-released to the drive-in circuit, the end of swamp apes - and outdoor theaters - was clearly in sight. Two years later, Riggio retired for old set, filmmaker in Wisconsin produced a home-grown horror film that was not just a backwoods indie horror. Riggio's director for as years with *Peep White Trash* Entertainment (published it, evidently concluding that it was no worse than their other titles.

Bog

Produced by Michelle Marshall
Directed by Don Koslow

Bog is a cheaply made horror movie about a woman who is a resident of from its dwelling in the primordial ooze at the bottom of a Wisconsin lake by a fisherman using dynamite for red mud ool. After dumping the rotting corpse on a

spotlight, the monster, represented only by point-of-view shots and an appearance at the conclusion (more on that later), takes its situation in the stomach areas of two obsessive viewers. The woman's looks are found in the movie, still clothed (as New World production that has drawn it of blood.

Vicente was more fortunate; they're only dressed of all pretense. Bog is a horror, intense, more like film that has previous little to offer with general audience or horror film complaints. More at the scene that Bog has a potentially great end of a movie veteran, including the late *John* Ray, Marshall Thompson, Leo Gordon, and, in a dual role, Gene De Haven. The latter portrays both the town psychologist and an old swamp bog who holds the key to the mystery of the swamp monster. Also 2 with her to stem, she maintains the carboniferous material given to.

In fact, De Haven and Thompson (who portrays the town doctor) provide one of the few amusing moments of Bog as a low-budgeted piece, it's a pity to see two middle-aged professionals play out the "love scenario." Unfortunately for the filmmakers, that twist may partly account for the film's failure to find normal distribution before the right could be cheaply purchased for home video.

More likely, major distributors were deterred by Bog's awkward dialogue and technical ineptness. I suspect what was asked in nearly every scene ending with a cheap freeze-frame? Did you know Tim Turner advised the film's unique sound by playing the microphone in a bucket? Finally, what being a somewhat disturbed Bog's inhuman monster combine with its heavy rubber skin and a night painted on eyes? Who are these people?

Despite its catchable cast, the waterlogged Bog almost rises above the mark of its cheap and low-budget production. In fact, Bog makes even the worst of Larry Bushman's AIP movies seem like the work of David Cronenberg. But don't take these comments as an all-out indie recommendation. Bog is the classic equivalent of swamp gas.

[Bog was available on video from Peep White Trash Entertainment until the company folded. More recently it has been spotted lurking in the aisles of K Mart on cheap tape recorded in the LP format. Whatever the price is too much.]

Peep White Trash suffered another blow in 1978 with *The Florida Connection*, a full drag-smuggling drama that tried to transmute the drive-in of *The French Connection* with the focus of southern Florida.

The Florida Connection

Produced by Manny Crosner
Directed by Robert J. Koehn

Rarely has a movie about drug smugglers been so unimpressive as Robert J. Koehn's *The Florida Connection* (Cinema Video), a badly plotted tale about a federal investigation. Dan Panoian is Dan Gordon, a drug smuggler who has been put in prison. When he is released, he is the best of his career. He is going to let Gordon that he is actually a federal agent posing as a pilot.

As Gordon, Dan Patinkin gives new meaning to the word "fellow." But one-dimensional performance is topped only by that of his co-star, Jane Wollerton, as the "fiftieth Nineteen Year Doctor."

Wollerton's performance in this case only demonstrates how desperately she once wanted to make movies in the States. The ease with which director Linney has turned her self-wounded focus in revealing conflict is countered by her lifetime presence and bad acting. The lax quality of the script by director Linney, producer Cronin, and Bill Whitlock would confound the Royal Shakespeare Company, let alone those tight budgets. Filtered through, mostly covering the unconscious love affair between the seagull and the aquaplane. A scene in which Forester and Wollerton discuss puka shells while smoking in the mud only seems tedious.

The Florida Connection faces better work its supporting players. A highlight is the appearance of Bob Leslie in a typical all but badly directed scene from *Therapy* County. As Rodasack, Leslie intercepts a game of pool in a lonely barroom scene. The cut is awarded all with Bill Thurman ("My Swamp Trash") and profane wit Ole Nelson.

Producer Cronin (or Cronin) had previously directed the same. Legend of Blood Mountain, a film that is far more entertaining film. Work before its classic shoot-out between the seagulls, the Fish, and a few corrupt cops. The Florida Connection has educated viewers with previous narrative that adds little to either the development of suspense or the establishment of theories.

Although it cannot be recommended for its contribution to the cinema of swamp cinema, *The Florida Connection* should be considered by those who have difficulty sleeping. Viewers should avoid exposing their slumber for the next several hours.

The mid-seventies marked the end of its use in the production of southern exploitation. The drive-in was becoming studio format medium cinema, and the onset of home video was only a few years away. As exploitation was co-opted by mainstream Hollywood, the familiar motif of swamp trap could be seen in such films as *Walker* Bill's *Southern Comfort* (1976), a line film of vengeance in the Louisiana bayous which unconsciously perpetuated the Copas as a metaphor of sinister film. Meanwhile, independent exploitation began to wane.

With the collapse of the independent filmmaking industry came the downfall of regional films. Everyone all across America was watching the same movies. Well, almost everyone. Back in 1953, audiences in southern Louisiana were treated to a feature crafted by the Copas and a director that rarely never played *Southern*.

Nutrition: The Copasaw Creature

Produced by Martin Fols
Directed by Joseph J. Catanzano

The biggest surprise of *Nutrition: The Copasaw Creature* is its look. The film has a professional touch that just doesn't match its typically crude regional flavor. The

perfect beverage accompaniment would be Thunderbird in crystal masonry; it's that deposits. The second surprise is how bland a film as filled can be. *Tales in the Swamp*, the best adventure video rental, is more indicative of the low level of creativity behind *Nutrition*, which was made in the wake of the success of the *Bayou* series. The one original touch that the *Nutrition* employs to differentiate *Nutrition* from other Copasaw movies is to suggest that a swamp woman is eating the video just to see for herself. Almost.

In their laboratory deep in the Louisiana bayou, two scientists secretly experiment with living matter. For justice and other foreign reasons, the main, a scientist called the Copas, is a man living isolated from mankind in a tower without the first test. Although originally from South America, these ability robots grow (what) much of the southern U.S., where they're most frequently spotted as roadkill. In their own



to create bigger movies to help finance the dream for far in South America (1976), the scientist reject one of the little barrels with known ingredients. They should have known better. For the entire video of the swampy form and wigs a one minute campaign against the toxicology whose traps prey upon its brethren.

Fighting the mutants in the game women (Billy Holliday) who discovered the first victim's body, and a backwoods family of trappers whose poaching activities have been carried by the presence of police in the bayou. Word of the monster terrorizing the copas (Cajun for "swamp") soon spreads. While military officials learn of the mutated experiment, the last evidence is a full-scale assault on the bayou. Tomorrow, the police will lead and government forces in the coming attack.

Curiously, although executive producer Fols (played as the film's classic scenes of a man in a boat, helicopter, and other props, he apparently caught up more pocket change for the monster's costume. Fols and Catanzano may keep them carefully hidden in their homes in the bushes or hidden in shadows for most of the film, but the few glimpses afforded are disgusting. One point leads to unexplained injury when an old swamp woman escapes from a man in a postcard but reports to the police that her attacker was a "giant man."

As the game warden, Holliday, who made one more movie (*French Quarter Unleashed*) with Catanzano before boarding that arctic to eternity, provides the film's most professional acting. He is springing, however, by his no star, all local

actors or women from *Hawaii*. *Nutrition*: Those women provide *Nutrition* with its greatest asset: the strength of locality that is also that from film for major cinema. One can imagine how Holliday would have portrayed Michael Jackson's character T-Bird, a fat coward who provides comic relief as a foil to his partner brother.

Ultimately, the bayou authenticity provided through the involvement of local actors isn't enough to offset Holliday's swampy creep. There's a better film from 1976, *Nutrition*'s script and director are too timid and sure-fire to support its stated purpose. The cinema of grotesque swamp film is present, but it's surrounded by a bayou of boredom.

(Nutrition: The Copasaw Creature is available on New World Video as Terror in The Swamp.)

Nutrition's failure at finding a national distributor is indicative of how locally-made exploitation films were no longer a safe option for independent films about swamp women, or killer helicopters were the realm of studio whose productions were too expensive to be labeled swamp trash. Although it seemed in 1976 that swamp-related exploitation had completely died, *Ford* and *Bevery* *Southern* strongly appeared with a script that is far better than *Gator Bait II*.

Gator Bait II: Cajun Justice

Produced and Directed by Ford and Beverly Sebastian

Whereas the first *Gator Bait* had Claudia Jennings, the sequel offers a king-beard, recently married referee named Oleo. And so is the world of video media tragedy with deathly repetition. Yet the main reason *Gator Bait II* is so good is how *Ford* and *Beverly* could have made this at all in 1976.

Photos, *Gator Bait II* is their surprise. *Angela* (Jan MacKenzie), born in the swamp but raised in the city, marries a Copas (a copas named Big T (Donner's younger brother in *Gator Bait*). Living at a house called, the new-born crime the bayou in their suburban, look into the solitude of their bedroom, and check their traps every so often. Big T teaches his wife the fundamentals of swamp success in a series of lessons on traps, navigation, operation, and other swampy details. When an alligator is released and repaid by a gang of males to be released by the ball-line Leroy (who died in the first film, accidentally), a is forced to rely on Big T's survival training tips to escape them.

Viewers will need to rely on a long Louisiana coffee for survival through this cheaply-made piece to trap and revenge. Although even better photographed than its predecessor, *Gator Bait II* is so obviously constructed that it's predictable. This sequel is further dominated by a series of unimpressive performances which suggest that the Sebastian have achieved professional actors, even of the former theater variety, for complaint friends and relatives who lack either the skill to pretend or the willingness to overcome. While

MacKenzie, the Schismers' lead vocalist, frolics-foreswims, belts a soulful chorus to the thalassian role of Angelique. Trip Leone is quietly rebellious in her husband's (Chick) and uncorrupted in front of the camera. Leone appears to be copying someone's flavor with her participation. (It's not me!) Scenes with MacKenzie seem mostly as grotesque as those of her subsequent gang-rapes. The good old boy rapists themselves, one of whom is played by the Schismers' own then, are indistinguishable from under-dressers in dozens of other low-budget movies; if these guys could act, I'd suspect that the Schismers had filled up *Camping Central* for a handful of "academic" rapists' types.

But the motley action of *Gutter Bait II* seem to have been hand-picked by the Schismers to deflect potential criticism that a good cost had been wasted. To be fair to those would-be snobs, however, it must be noted that the Schismers' defilement script stems from, both in style and spiritively, adult to the core. Although scenes of rape and revenge are the film's blood and butter, its art are unquestioned. Filmed in Louisiana, the Schismers are ultimately more interesting than those of Angelique's staling her stomach.

In its video release, *Gutter Bait II* was pre-empted to a series as a "new" piece with the first film, which may help explain the Schismers' apparent indifference to the project. Instead of making a low-budget sequel of the first film, the Schismers actually chose to remake it with new (but smaller) characters and then show it to Premiere! But *Gutter Bait II* is far short of its predecessor. What a hardboiled classic it is: "I want some puss, say" to the amusement of his black-and-white, *Gutter Bait II* has and all it can.

[*Gutter Bait II*: Caplan Justice is available for those who must see it, on Phoenix Home Video.]

Nowadays as with the whole of exploitation filmmaking, saving trash has been virtually outlawed by the studios. Only the faintest of hints "rise" from such low-budget school as the comic book, rejected *Swamp Thing* series or from a quickly forgotten idea of *Butcher* (crops director Andrew Kornhauser's *Silly People*). Since Ford and Beverly Sobotnik have forsaken the genre in favor of horror (and plenty repeat about women's structure. Aside from *Silly* Brownie's insurance)

preproduction on *Bayou Bloodbath* two years ago, a hoped-for return to form which has yet to surface, *Gutter Bait II* appears to have faded along with most exploitation in general. As the money flows south of its regional flavor to the mainstream familiarity of commercialization, the style of off-the-cuff filmmaking that gave birth to swamp trash is only a hazy memory of a colorful show-business past.

Entertainment is more complex these days. Chastened adult roles are still as affordable as in the Florida swamp, but instead of those days early drive-in there now is the Orlando, there at Walt Disney World, sophisticated-complexing work on *Adipose* (Bogus, a new resort village with the look and feel of the Cuban culture of Hilton House). The moon is closed to include dirt paths, several fishing holes, and yes, a *Lemmings*-style bogus.

Dave Friedman Triple Header by Charles Kager

For too long, the films of producer David E. Friedman, the "Mighty Moors" of *Exploitation*, have been remembered by those of his ex-partners, director Hanchul Gordon Leone, the cannibal *"Blind Of Gore"* (Friedman claims he due with the recent video release of two of his exploitation films from the aqueducts). The Defilers, Friedman's second Los Angeles feature, seemed to take in the studio industry with a rubbery grin from Friedman (which he based on John Ford's novel *The Collector*) and a very serious from director Lee Frost.

The Defilers

Directed and photographed by E.L. Frost
Written and produced by David E. Friedman



A SHATTERING STUDY OF THE SHAMELESS 'SICK-SET'... FOR SHOCK-PROOF ADULTS...!



After moving to Los Angeles and securing an Associate Producer on the Candy Store audio title *My Tale Is Hot*, exploitation legend David E. Friedman hired Lee Frost, the purveyor of real terror producer Bob Cannon, to direct a film he hoped would top whatever his own passion could offer. The result was *The Defilers*, a brutal "snatch" that questioned and out-grossed its peers during its initial 1975 release. Although *The Defilers* is one of Friedman's best films, screenings have been infrequent since its debut because of subsequent public distaste for black-and-white horror.

The Defilers follows the street path of sadistic mob kid Carl (Byronne Miller) and his equally privileged gay Jewish friend (Norman Finkel) as they beg, bribe, murder, cheat, with maniacal black humor, and eventually kidnap and possess a beautiful young Milwaukee (Mia Farrow) as the basement of a dilapidated building, owned by Carl's shambler father. The hapless girl is made victim to the duo's cruelty and abuse, particularly from the white-washing Carl. She is starved, beaten, and raped before a wicked fight between the irrepressible Jewson and his sinister role model decides her fate.

Friedman's bleak tale of degradation suggests its past primarily on the strength of Frost's brilliant direction and photography. (Farrow's alienation is the core of American and regional ethnic. Exploitation director Mike (aka B. Ron Elliott) portrays the sadistic Carl.



with a convincing, unrelenting glow, reportedly Mabo agreed to act in the film when the drama student originally slated to play the role panicked on the first day of shooting.

The *Defflers* foretold the film *First Interlude* made with Bob Coen's more than those of Friedman, most of the latter's Experimental Variations productions exhibited not for intensity. Nevertheless, their collaboration yielded what is a snapshot as regards the cinematic stills. It's ugly, but you can't look away.

A vibrant foreman of subsequent era films, The *Defflers* is not only a must-see for exploitation fans but an important artifact of a particular branch of American show business that faded with the arrival of home video and hardcore porn. The video debut of *The Defflers* includes an entire series of various-size neighborhood features produced by Friedman. The second of these, Friedman's fourth post-Lewis feature, born the infamous title *A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine* (1964).

A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine
Directed by R. Ben El-Mechaieq
(Rylen Mabo)
Written and Produced by David F. Friedman

Walking a thin tightrope between the sexual cautions of *The Defflers* and *Starline's* played as if necessary. *A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine* consciously resists a straight face. This show of strident clashes violently with Friedman's deliciously overripe script, a hair-raising collection of howlers that bubble under beneath the film's harsh exterior. That the script is hopelessly dated only adds to the film's combat allure.

Stacey Walker is Sharon Watson, an office worker whose passion is teasing her dates into a sexual and then spurning their advances with accusations of rape. Her false charges lead to the imprisonment of a class-out young guy in the film opening, followed by the destruction of a girl's promising office career. Sharon dates co-worker Lowell Carter (Sam Melville), who she coo-toasts until he cannot sleep

for having dreams of being tied to a post and subjected to her savage whims. Carter awakes screaming as the dream Sharon coaxes up his kidneys with a smile. Later, the real Sharon agrees to consummate their affair but once again falsely accuses rape. Driven mad with lust, Carter attempts to rape a woman and is killed by her husband. Unlured, Sharon does a strenuous job of not being angry when her hostility is triggered by her seeing

The wacky out-of-control of *A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine* will, no doubt, make the ranks of the politically correct. Some will not doubt reason: William Kennedy Smith and will condemn the film for setting to justify date rape. Yet it could be just as easily argued that Friedman's hard script is propaganda for male-beasts and anti-porn morality. The clip of Mabo's window-sneaking girls magazines and their stalling a pretty housewife would fit in as both a social commentary by either the American Family Association or Women Against Pornography. All right, the script lacks any definite point of view that would qualify it as a polemic. Rather, *A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine* follows the moribund formula of vintage exploitation (a window on "sex" what you see"), particularly with its sexual face-out.

Though not as self-consciously arty as *The Defflers*, *A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine* features crisp, carefully composed cinematography from Lewis Kovacs (credited as "Art Radford"). [Smith was Kovacs' second feature film in America, the first was Friedman's *The Notorious Daughters Of Penny Hill*, also with Stacey Walker.] The film further benefits from its appealing cast. Particularly good is Sam Melville of television's *The Rockford* as a poor school teacher mad by lust. As Sharon, Stacey Walker manages to keep a straight face while delivering



ABOVE (Left to right), Cameraman Lasho Kovacs, Director David F. Friedman, and Assistant Cameraman Myron Griffin on the set of *A Smell Of Honey, A Swallow Of Brine*



ABOVE: Two scenes featuring cult director Edward D. Wood, Jr. as a conical transvestite from Joseph F. Robertson's reactionary skin flick *Mrs. Stone's Thing*.

such gross as it, "I may be a bitch, but I'm not a bitch!" She also has the best eyeline in the business.

Although it is full short of The Hellfire Society, A Small Of Honey, A Swallow Of Eden, and The Laughing, Lampooning Lures Of David F. Friedman is a real million for the Pridemore/Sweeney team. The film's own combination of double-enders and camp-over-the-top parodies the go-for-broke cynicism of their later productions for EMI-video, including exploitation's checkered past. It's a roller, all right, but one well worth cheering off.

A third video release offers a collection of coming attractions reels from captions of Friedman's post-Lords productions, including *Love Camp 7* (1968), *Reel Of Shame* (1968), and *Tender Harms* (1970). The *Laughing, Lampooning Lures Of David F. Friedman* is a treatment to the one with which Friedman designed pictures for his films.

Most of the previous work collages leave the plausible Friedman touch. Some offer a silly commentary over satirical film snippets, while others adopt a subtle parody or an underground look. They vary in style and in mood, ranging from the silly (*Tender Harms*), the erotic (*Adventures Of Zorro*), to the satirical (*Love Camp 7*, *The Sackless*). Many three with a campy look to go.

Except for some indifferent notes on the back of the box, *The Laughing, Lampooning Lures Of David F. Friedman* is a truly honest delight and a welcome look back. It's the trailer tape to beat in the new year.

[The Hellfire, A Small Of Honey, A Swallow Of Eden, and The Laughing, Lampooning Lures Of David F. Friedman are available from Something Weird Video. See ad inside back cover.]

Free Love Fallout by Charles Kilgore

Consenters of U.S. truth filmmaking cannot be blamed for indulging in occasional attacks of "upset the cycle." Early exploitation films debilitated such posing social problems as white slavery and drug addiction, primarily to attract anxious viewers the opportunity to see what happened to a life-sized woman sold "on the block" or to a pretty young teen desperate for her last fix. These films, of course, were primarily shown on the sly, as far away from the prying eyes of law enforcement officials as evil-doers could manage. The appearance of Ray Moore's *The Immoral Mr. Teas* and similar films that began coming straight against reality in motion pictures, resulting in the gradual erosion of laws banning on-screen depictions of "naughty" scenes was hence. In female war movies post-sold women in settings as wholesome that no prosecutor could attack the film as appealing to prurient interest. The setting for these films was most conspicuously a world camp. The problems were then how long could audiences watch volleyball games and peacock frolics, albeit featuring naked women, without falling asleep?

Audience boredom with nude pictures led to the popularity of "roughies," the next trend. Roughies depicted audiences bored with the nude scenes by appealing to a morbid fascination with violent acts, as in Dennis Wickham's *Bad Girls Go To Hell* (1965) and David F. Friedman's *The Bitchies* (see above). Roughies were commonly set in wildernesses, slave markets, and other dens of depravity. But with the mid-sixties another cycle began, this one induced in by the free love movement. Audiences asked films were shown with happy couples dancing to go-go bass and keeping their way through psychedelic scenes. The new setting was the commune or crash pad, where often there not in San Francisco or Los Angeles. Although these

films were produced as if they were made for the enjoyment of happy free-lovers, the audience was actually the same as before, disinterested men-to-be-men who had viewed reality in a more usually repressed era and who eyed the free love gracelessness with a mixture of bemusement and envy. Unlike in the roughies, the willing women in the free love films expected no monetary payment for their sexual favors, the experience itself was the payoff. Lurid imaginations is needed to understand why men who had been lashed by his wife into a life of domestic drudgery would fantasize about females who forewent her free fucking over the drowsed restriction of holy matrimony.

But in 1969, the year of *Moon* and *Altman*, the happy dream cracked. *Thug-A-Billy*, the setting for many of the free love signs, was surely with pictures and petty criminals. The images of *Easy Rider* went down by the roadside, and America searched once again for a new direction. As you get it, it was a business man.

The following year, writer-producer-director Joseph F. Robertson summed up the death of the free love postures with *Mrs. Stone's Thing*, a cultism sex film that traces history of asceticism and dualism. To plot a couple George Stone, a businessman who works for middle-aged husband McMillan (not, not, not), refuses to allow his wife Martha to gamble in the company-sponsored casino in his brother's house. His best friends Rex and Phyllis, along with McMillan himself, persuade George to bring her along. McMillan, his almost mother-in-law, has been dying to take his mistress but mainly married (and then, more challenging) Martha for some time. At the party, Martha first accuses McMillan (whose fantasy is the promise of a man for husband George), then Rex, and finally a permissive Johnnie. Finding his wife between the legs of the latter, George blows his stack. Back home, he and Martha compare the women tell that free love is moving from their marriage. They vow to avoid future

infidelity, and the film ends with the hint of an impending shift by the monk to the Stone residence. Mrs. Stone's "thing" is turned out, its marriage and motherhood.

Detest yet curiously inspired because of a contemporary shift towards "traditional" values, Mrs. Stone's Thing resembles prophecies from the American Family Association. McMurphy's egg, which consummated most of the film's running time, is a cruel quest of every back and forth that pre-homosexuals would allow. Explicit cross-dressing shifts scenes of flagellation, homosexuality, drug use, transvestitism, lesbianism, and other anomalies. The most repellent of these segments is an extended scene between one couple who are so biologically fit that they must pull together two post tables to move as a bid for their amorous desire. The saddest is the appearance of a dumpy, straggly-haired Ed Wood (based on the comical Ed Woods) as a mad, nose-dive into his disapproval of writing the clothing of his best wife. Wearing the late cult director's own actual transvestite - camp play for laughs as a middle-aged man, appearing into women's clothing and makeup is to him a violent degradation and self-betrayal. One can only hope that Wood was well compensated for the indignity.

Wood's career is painful, but the heart and soul of Mrs. Stone's Thing comes center in one of the peripheral sketches that precedes the only scene. A young girl performs her good-will love to a young biggest girl who rarely sucks on a tightly rolled joint as its mistress. "I'd like to take you to Miami for dinner on Sunday," he confesses, as the girl declines. As he heads for the door, his "girlfriend" stretches out her palm and reminds him that her love costs ten dollars.

[Mrs. Stone's Thing is available on French Screenings and Vides under the title The Sensuous Wife.]

J'ACCUSE: The Passion of Abel Gance

by Stephen R. Dziewie

"You're afraid. Fear has seized you because you betrayed your deed. Fear has taken hold of you because you know no love! Fear the death rattle in those millions of throats - I Accuse!" Accused! Accuse!

- Victor Francis in J'Accuse (1936)

Abel Gance's remake of his own J'Accuse (1936) has been too long denied its heritage as both a classic anti-war film and a panoramic and gripping masterpiece of the landscape. Commenced in 1936, the film's release of its fully restored version will hopefully establish its proper niche in the history of both international cinema and the horror genre.

Film historian and archivist Bob Harris presented the restored version of Abel Gance's J'Accuse at 1979's Telluride Film Festival and at FILMEX (Los Angeles International Film Exposition). It had never been previously seen in the US in an complete form. Though not made of clips from cutting Harris' restoration "definitive" - or Gance scholar Morris King has noted, "there is as much thing as a definitive version." However Gance remade his film several times. For release in different countries or in different countries¹ - it is that version that Commencement has released. In even the has mastered only a ripple in the current video market's seemingly unobtainable there for now released.

J'Accuse's abbreviated American release version, That They May Live (1936), was the only version not previously available. (on video from Warner Classics)

J'Accuse had rarely been screened in Europe, either. Following the Fourth government's ban of the film prior to the Nazi occupation of World War II. Though Gance clearly intended J'Accuse to be a provocative film, amazingly appropriating its tale from an early major depicting and pointed term-of-the-century attack against anti-Semitism and racial antagonism, he certainly hadn't expected to follow so closely in Erich Zola's footsteps.² Nearly a year after the release of the feature, Gance's gripping answer to his own was judged a disastrous work.

J'Accuse was the title of the latter renowned French writer and novelist Emile Zola completed in Captain Alfred Dreyfus' defense. Dreyfus stood accused of writing an unsigned, treasonous message to the German Embassy in 1894. The German Embassy had turned the postcard letter over to the French, sparking a vicious

accusation and subsequent military tribunal leveled against Dreyfus. A few The evidence against Dreyfus was scant, and a lot indicated that one Major Esterhazy was guilty. Nevertheless, the military's hidden agenda culminated in the innocent Dreyfus being stripped of his rank and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island in 1895.

The trial and sentence was an explosive issue. Zola called to Dreyfus' defense, introducing the case and publishing his observations under the title J'Accuse in the French newspaper L'Aurore in January 1898. Through Zola was promptly sentenced to one year in prison - a sentence he eluded by going himself to the United Kingdom from 1898-1900 - J'Accuse proved too volatile to ignore. Zola's public masterpiece prompted public outrage, investigations were demanded, and the



ABOVE: Victor Francis as Jean Diaz in Abel Gance's 1936 J'Accuse.

subsequent mass of legal proceedings led to Major Cassandre being found guilty while Dreyfus was reluctantly pardoned (but not exonerated) in 1965.¹

Zola's cry of "J'Accuse" had been heard, and echoed throughout France as a potent expression of outrage against military and societal crimes. Two decades later — and again forty years later — Eisenstein, Abel Gance would appropriate the rallying cry for his own cinematic outrage against the forces of war.

Emerging from the Russian theatrical scene as a performer, Gance's rising career spilled onto the screen with *Leonce et Léonor* (1909). Drawn to film with the limited budgets open to artists in the new medium, Gance began to add assemblage to his own studio, a few of which attracted prestigious directors such as Louis Feuillade (*Le film de Papillon*, 1910) and Albert Capellani (*Le Mari du Duc d'Angoulême* and *Le Châ de Lamoignon*, both 1910). *Cyranus de Bergerac* and *Les Trépassés* (1912) followed.

Amour de Mona (1911) and *Le Capitaine Corcoran* (1912) followed. In 1913, Gance turned his own production company, Le Film Français and launched his directorial efforts with *Le Tigre* (aka *Pour Saquer la Hollande*) (1912). Among his partners was renowned actor Adolphe de Mila, who starred in Gance's French film, *Le Mariage d'Arctique* (1912), an early horror film which drew from the scientific film genre. Compared to the rest, and proved modestly profitable despite the poor quality of its initial release prints.

As his ambitions and skill became more assured, Gance's flirtation with *Le Fantôme* led to producer Louis Nipius (famous for *Le film de l'Arctique*, 1913). Although celebrated by avant-garde circles, it remains a badly-received experiment with unusual camera effects achieving a slight marriage of art and science which is at best a light ray capable of drawing nothing real. Nipius and his company, Film d'Art, were famous. "It was wartime, the public needed escapism, and movies — not anything experimental such as this. The company refused to show it, Gance was ordered to see the film (with) several more and several refusals."

Disappointed, Gance began a career as a serviceable, personally inspired technician and filmmaker for Nipius, including *Le Fantôme de la Housse* (1915), where as a

sounder electronics he shifted his telephone (in an *Arctique* scene) *Horror By Phone*, 1915). All were produced quickly and proved commercially successful. Gance soon translated the momentum upon him. Frustrated by the limited compensation of his prod scene where the director saw such advancement potential, Gance pushed the boundaries again with *Le film de la Vie* (1916), *Mister Dehenné* (1917), and *Le Drame Symphonique* (1918), psychological dramas which advanced and refined Gance's directorial skills, even as they earned profits at the boxoffice.² Though these normal theatrical and academic works "in the style of their times, their solitariness (was) relieved by the beauty of [their] imagery. Gance was now in love with the cinema, and his passions were constant in every shot."³



November, World War I was still raging in Europe and Gance was eventually mobilized into the military's cinematography unit. After several recruitment refusals because of his poor health, Hans Gance conceived of the original *J'Accuse* (1919), the film which eventually earned the director international acclaim.

The film's origins are a part of some controversy. The French film was clearly a humanitarian and today not unlike its anti-war successor, but *J'Accuse* might have been, originally conceived with quite the opposite intent. Gance's extraordinary cinematographer, Leonor-Henry Berré, claimed that *J'Accuse* began as a commercial film produced for Charles Pathé, hence the unusual composition from the far left side war footage by the military.

"With his assistant Blaise Cendrars who had lost an arm in the war, Gance set to work. The film was

neatly finished when suddenly the war was over. To the end Gance was at a loss to know what to do with a propaganda film with so war to go with it. Abel changed the title around and turned it into the famous anti-war film we all know."⁴

Gance refuted this version of events, claiming that *J'Accuse* was originally conceived as the first of a cinematic trilogy "which would show the destruction of war, and the new society that could emerge from it."⁵ Gance lost many friends on the beaches — a fact bitterly reflected in both versions of *J'Accuse* — and his difficulty working with the military even led him to be drafted continued his contempt for the war. He has also cited Blaise Cendrars's memoir novel *Le Feu* as having a profound impact upon his attitude. "Why would I walk a

J'Accuse!" Gance once argued to senior René Dussolier who, enchanted with Gance's class, wrote Dussolier's screenplay. "He might have called it *J'Accuse* when the war was rather over," he also ascertained among Gance's personal letters and drew evidence to support Gance's contention. In 1916, [Gance] wrote: "How I wish that all those killed in the war would rise up and attack us like this!"⁶

convinced, Dussolier, he too of their sacrifice was with anything at all. The war would stop at its own accord, heralded by its own defeats."⁷

An earlier conversation between Dussolier and Gance yielded a veritable cornucopia of words to verify Gance's claims. The filmmaker described to Dussolier the filming of the opening takes in which soldiers going to form the letters of the title, providing commentary from a witness's account who was the last person to film the war to rise from the trenches, moving in Gance's account of mobilizing two thousand soldiers on leave from the Vosges front for the filming of the climax. "They played the dead knowing that as all publicity they'd be dead thousands before long," Gance recalled. "Within a few weeks of their death, ninety per cent had been killed."⁸



ABOVE: The front of the Rialto Theatre in Times Square, NYC for the second run of J'Accuse. Note how it is being pushed as a horror movie to the Times Square audiences.

Nevertheless, J'Accuse was censored while Guce was in red in the military. Like many military cinematographers, Guce had instinctively avoided filming trench warfare, once a number of his peers died trying to capture such destruction on celluloid. Guce was inevitably assigned to make a film about "terrors at war," yielding nothing before his censors. Even the film was, a short time later, from the military. Returning to Film d'Art, Guce began work on the never-completed *Rosa Hesse* (Le Soleil Noir) in April of 1918 until French censors, having flunked to a halt. Guce wrote to Charles Fiebo, who promised him the rights to make J'Accuse. Guce's presentation of the project, in whatever form it existed at that time, led to the military transferring Guce into the Cinematography Service, where Guce joined French and American soldiers in the barracks of St. Mihiel. The resulting footage was soon edited into J'Accuse II.

It is entirely possible that Guce recognized his role was diminished to the military as a propagandist narrative in

order to secure their cooperation. This is pure speculation, but it might explain both Durr's and Guce's version of events (though Guce never asserted that this was the case). At this difficult point in his career, Guce desperately needed to secure harmonious relations with both the military and his producers, allowing him to complete his film according to his own subjective agenda with minimal interference.

Durr's allegations concerning J'Accuse's domestic status as a recruitment film will probably never be resolved, though the film's narrative — concerned as it is with romantic fidelity and the protagonist's duty of its love to his character rather than the state's military pacifist duty — lends more credence to his claims. Unlike Guce's 1918 version, the 1919 version's celebrated sequence in which the casualties of the trench were rose from the dead was presented as a character's delirium, a visionary suggest that erupted from an exhausted combatant like a bolt of lightning. Subjectively and narratively it is almost an afterthought, however.

deviating in impact. Whatever the truth behind its propagandist intentions, J'Accuse was indeed the first film to question the war, and in a final form it did so with a vengeance.

J'Accuse proclaimed not if "The Most Romantic Tragedy of Modern Times," and its narrative fulfilled this aspiration. It rest of the mission in the romantic triangle between childhood friends, Francois Lacroix (Savaria-Marc) and Jean Duv (Bernard Louche), now adults in love with Edith (Marie Duvrey). Francois has become her passionate brutal husband, his first appetite for loving and blood counter to the post-war's romantic, visionary world. They seemingly incompatible partners and the almost his sexual bond between them, as if they were a "complete man" only in conjunction with one another, in the role of Guce's film.

Francois and Jean's rivalry extends into their serving together in the war, where Jean first acts as Francois' superior in their shared battles, later returning as a priest.

under Franco's command. The obduracy and will of their enemy and friendship – Jean takes Franco's place in a dangerous mission, and their assignment changes to a united effort against the war itself – is further fueled by Lili's desperation, imprisonment, infatuation with a child, and subsequent abandonment from Franco. Ultimately Franco is mortally wounded during a famous battle, and Jean returns into a shell shock and insanity. In strict sleep-talking terms, the narrative's war-torn conclusion has been reached without Franco, Jean can surely die. Gance's final act, however, edited J'Accuse out of the realm of melodrama and into the victory.

Swapping the battlefield and finding his way back to Lili, Jean gathers the villagers of his home. His condition turns with news of their dead, slain in the war, and his vision of the corpse makes an move from the battlefield to march in procession against the living. "They're on the march! They're coming! They will be here soon and you will have to answer for yourselves! They will come to drive us out with joy if your sacrifice has been to no purpose!"¹⁰ Gance's staging of the sequence now makes anything else before it tedious.

As the dead rise up, Gance lights the arena across the studio and overloads the French studio with the Victory March through the Arc de Triomphe. The rebellion marches through the countryside it shows in every possible way, with superimposed men, trucks, and swaying shaped masses of all tinted a funeral purple.¹¹

Horrified by the vision, the villagers flee. Jean returns to his home and discovers his pre-war pacifist poetry. Tearing it up, he reads against his belief: "My dream nation of yesterday has become 'J'Accuse!'" Jean cries against an impressive montage of landscape and natural backgrounds, and I assume you. So, of having given light to that appalling war. As the two sets and the fight fades, Jean expires.

Commenting on Gance's own abbreviated version of the original J'Accuse, Norman King says "it is the melodramatic that survives, at the expense of the epic."¹² The melodrama is down and Gance's complete version, one, making it accessible to audiences even as it left them unprepared and overwhelmed by the horrific code. J'Accuse provided a timely and truly horrifying vision for Europe's war-torn sensibilities, opening it all just more days after the signing of the Armistice ended the first World War (a fact which further compromises Louise Henry Gance's alignment).

Safely J'Accuse was opened by American distributors. The U.S. government commission established to review foreign films for impact on the U.S. was over "not for subversive, pacifist, and so on,"¹³ and J'Accuse was clearly suspect. With Father unable to secure interstate distribution through major commercial channels, Gance ventured to America himself with a re-edited version for his New York debut at the City-Corson. Among the audience was D.W. Griffith, who was so moved by the film that he persuaded United Artists partner Charles Chaplin,

Douglas Fairbanks, and Mary Pickford to distribute the film. Its release between U.S. showings in 1912 were a failure, as post-war American audiences had an aversion to foreign dramas and now sought escapism rather than grim confessionalism, however inspiringly enough.

Footshadowing the "audience market" impact of later post-war films such as *Exodus* (1960), *Poetry* (1962), and *The Passion* (1973), reports of audience aversion in finding and being denied from the films spread. J'Accuse's phenomenal popularity across in France, Britain, and all of Europe. The shock this to different audiences, however, carried a potent moment message. "If this film had been shown in every country and in every town in the world in 1913," a *Fraser* newspaper review of the time proclaimed, "they might have been more so." J'Accuse was an international cause celebre, praised by the movie maestro D.W. Griffith himself, with 29-year-old Gance scored as France's greatest filmmaker.

Gance continued with the equally successful *La Roue* (1913) – Jean Courcier said, "There is cinema before and after *La Roue*, as there is painting before and after Picasso."¹⁴ – following it with his double masterpiece *Napoleon* (1927). Over a dozen films later, though, Gance's aim had faded. His international prominence came and in the shadow of Napoleon's own impact, his total discomfort with silent cinema pictures left him diminishing his stature and ability to attract producers or significant funds. "I made all these sound films, with my own staff, except perhaps *La Grand Amour* and *Le Destin*," J'Accuse, Gance later commented. "By 1928, the notion of mounting J'Accuse was irresistible to Gance – who needed a feature that would satisfy him artistically and financially – and his producers after all the 1919 reaction had been increasingly profitable as well in personnel and talent."¹⁵

[Stephen R. Heaslet's J'Accuse: The Passion of Abel Gance's conflagrant past rage with the filmmaker's horrific remains of his silent cinema.]

NOTES

- 1/ Bob Harris subsequently founded his own accountancy company, firm Franco Ltd, and most recently completed the celebrated reconstruction of David Laue's Lawrence of Arabia and Kirk Douglas and Stanley Kubrick's Spartacus.
- 2/ Norman King, *Abel Gance: A Politics of Spectacle* (BFI Publishing, 1984), p. 5.
- 3/ Note the coincidental release of Win Dietrich's *Academy Award* winning *The Love of Remie Zerk* in 1927, as Gance was filming his remake of J'Accuse.
- 4/ As detailed in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*, 5th Edition, edited by Margaret Dalziel, Oxford University Press, 1985, pp. 200, 1088-9.
- 5/ Kevin Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1986, p. 324.
- 6/ The title for one of Gance's features from that period, *Le Zeu de la Mort* (1917), suggests a Russian precedent to J'Accuse's climax. Despite the evocation

title, *Le Zeu de la Mort* appears to be a romantic melodrama and may just say its title, I have been unable to screen a print to confirm this.

- 7/ Kevin Brownlow, *Napoleon: Abel Gance's Cinematic Epic*, Reaktion Books Ltd (U.K.), 1982, pp. 35.
- 8/ Louise Henry Gance to Rene Froel, secretary, Editions Eclair-Scena, Paris, quoted from Brownlow, ibid., pp. 26-28.
- 9/ King, *Abel Gance: A Politics of Spectacle*, p. 320.
- 10/ This paragraph, and the quotes included in the preceding sentence, are from Brownlow, *Napoleon*, p. 26.
- 11/ Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 531-532.
- 12/ Brownlow, 1984, pp. 531-532.
- 13/ Abel Gance, J'Accuse, La Loupe Hervillaise, Paris, 1928, as translated by Brownlow, *The Parade's Gone By*, p. 326.
- 14/ Brownlow, 1984, p. 537.
- 15/ King, *Abel Gance*, p. 136. Note the length of Gance's three separate versions of the silent J'Accuse according to King. The feature which opened on April 25, 1919 ran 5,250 meters. Apparently these have a length, shown in few contemporary screenings (advertisers of the time were not accustomed to such enormous feature lengths). Gance later reduced the film to 4,250 meters (approximately 125 minutes) to be shown in three episodes, and finally it was reduced to 3,620 meters (King, *Ibid.*, pp. 236), which may have influenced the editing. Gance had done for the silent era's U.S. cinema with a running time (approximately 31.80 meters) comparable to that of the 1919 U.S. release of Gance's remake as *They They May Love*.

- 16/ Brownlow, 1984, pp. 538.
- 17/ Brownlow, *Ibid.*, pp. 538.
- 18/ Quoted from Brownlow, 1984, pp. 514.
- 19/ Brownlow, *Napoleon*, pp. 182.

20/ Fidelity for the 1920 U.S. release dried the silent J'Accuse as inspiration for two plays: *Heat* von Christopher's *Minut* at Verdun (1932) and *Love's Bury the Dead*.

As obvious here as possible is the final shot of Louis Mounet's climax *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), based on Erich Maria Remarque's pacifist novel. Mounet superimposed a procession of phalanx soldiers over a French countryside killed with corpses and devastation, as they march, the spectators consciously pause to look back at the audience as through.

Also note J'Accuse ground-breaking editing techniques, which Gance further refined to truly achieve an implacable outcome (with as few as four frames of a soldier) in *La Roue*, being seen in the silent feature that has been uniformly credited with such cinematic innovations.

NEXT ISSUE: The Wild World of Doug Hobart's J'Accuse Part Two Twisted Sex! More bizarre video!

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